Ex. Doc. No. 17.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

REDUCED POSTAGE.

LETTER

FROM THE

THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

TRANSMITTING

In compliance with a resolution of the House of the 21st instant, a communication from the First Assistant Postmaster General in regard to a system of reduced postages, &c.

DECEMBER 22, 1848.

Laid upon the table, and ordered to be printed.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
22d December, 1848.

SIR: In compliance with the resolution of the House of the 21st of December, directing me to communicate to the House any letter or report, from the First Assistant Postmaster General, or any other officer of the department, in regard to a system of reduced postages, I have the honor to state that, in the summer of 1847, I despatched the First Assistant Postmaster General to Europe as the special agent of the department, with instructions, among other things, to examine the best conducted systems in Europe, with a view to the improvement of our own. Since his return, I requested him to embrace, in his report, any observations that he might think useful for the better adjustment of the mail service in the United States, the management of the offices, and the rates of postage. On yesterday, he filed with the department a report embracing, I presume, all those subjects, and which I have not as yet had leisure to read.

Presuming that this is the report or letter called for by the

House, as there is no other on file in the department, the same is herewith transmitted.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. JOHNSON,
Postmaster General.

Hon. R. C. WINTHROP,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
December 13, 1848.

DEAR SIR: In the several conversations had with you as to the European post office system, the rates of postage, the mode of transportation, &c., you have expressed views in relation to our own rates of postage, the change of our system, or modification of it, which, from your thorough acquaintance with it, and the opportunities you have had of witnessing the operations of the best conducted offices in Europe, will render them valuable to the public. You will much oblige me if, at your leisure, you will furnish me with your views as to the rates of postage, and the modifications you may think advisable in our own system, and any suggestions that may occur to you that will improve the service, to be placed on the files of the department.

I am, respectfully, your obedient servant,

C. JOHNSON.

S. R. HOBBIE, Esq.

POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT,
Contract office, 21*st December*, 1848.

SIR: In obedience to your call for a statement of the views respecting the rates of postage and changes in the mode of performing the business of our post offices, which I had presented to you in several conversations as the result of my examinations abroad and acquaintance with our own system, I have the honor to submit the following:

You refer to my opportunites of witnessing the operations of the best conducted post offices in Europe. As the information respecting them, on other points than those above mentioned, may be interesting, and was obtained in pursuance of your instructions whilst attending, under your directions, to the business of our postal arrangements, I will embrace it in this communication, with such notice of the history and extent of our own post establishment as will show the gratifying comparison it holds with those of other countries.

I.—*Uniform cheap postage.*

When in London, in 1847, I met with Rowland Hill. The explanations of the principles and operations of the penny postage reform on several interesting points by its founder, drew my mind with increased earnestness to the consideration of a uniform rate and the reduction of postage.

The principle of a uniform rate of postage in England is sustain- by the following argument:—An average rate that will defray the cost of transportation on the short routes, will in the aggregate defray the whole cost of transportation; for the whole service consists in their respective localities of short routes. The long routes are made up by the connexion or combination merely of the short routes. That circumstance causes no additional expense, consequently there is no reason, looking to cost of transportation as the only element of postage, for making any additional or further charge upon letters conveyed over the long distances. That is a rule of easy application to Great Britain, and which works out there, as its natural result, cheap postage. For having on an area of 116,700 square miles a population of 27,000,000, pretty equally diffused, and pervaded by an active commercial and manufacturing business, it has no unproductive routes, and produces a large correspondence to sustain a limited system of mail conveyance. But the most important circumstance is, that in reducing their postage from high rates to a low and uniform one, they changed its nature from that of a tax, which it had been previously, (yielding a net revenue to the crown nearly equal to $8,000,000 annually,) to that of freight, or the price merely of transportation, including delivery, &c. Now with us, the proportions are reversed. Our population, assumed to be twenty millions at this time, is spread over an area, within the organized States, of 1,199,000 square miles. We have, consequently, numerous unproductive routes, many of which yield a revenue less than the half of their cost. This circumstance, and the fact that the postage on newspapers fails to pay the cost of their transportation by about one-third, and that this item of expense, and the cost of transporting franked matter through the mails, are cast upon the postage assessed upon charged letters, give to our postage the character of a tax. Make such disposition of the burthens I have referred to as will relieve postage of this character; change its nature, as they did in England, to that of freight; reduce it to the single element of cost of transportation;—then we may successfully emulate the example of England in postage reform, relying on the more elastic energies of a young and growing people to make up for the disadvantages of greater territory and less population. We have a counteracting advantage in possessing a much larger family and friendly correspondence in proportion to numbers; and growth and developement will rapidly augment the amount of business letters. I am well satisfied, from a general estimate, that the surplus cost of the unproductive routes, the expense of transporting newspapers beyond what the postage upon them defrays, and the amount that free matter would come to if charged with postage, could not be

less, at the most moderate calculation, than $1,000,000 annually. The official correspondence of the departments of the government, including Congress, is the public's correspondence. Why should not the public pay for it as an individual pays for his? It is the duty of the government to the citizen to establish and maintain routes under a great variety of circumstances, notwithstanding they may be unproductive, as a portion of that guardianship and protection that his allegiance entitles him to. And public policy requires that the diffusion of public intelligence, through the circulation of newspapers, be so cheapened as to be placed within the reach of all. But is it just that this should be done at the exclusive expense of a class of citizens who have no more interest in the matter than the rest of the public?

Supposing Congress should provide some other way for raising this $1,000,000 than by assessing it as a tax, exclusively on the postage payers of private correspondence, then what would be required would be a letter postage revenue, equal to the actual cost of the transportation of letters of the amount indicated in the following estimate. Assume the expenditures of the department at the amount of last year, put, for easier statement, at a round sum. I am aware there is to be an increase for mail service, but there are special items of expenditure for last year sufficient, with the savings in the middle section, to make the sum here stated answer, viz: $4,400,000.

Appropriation by Congress for the object stated.....	$1,000,000
Newspaper postage, not quite equal to that of last year, as something of a decline may be apprehended.....	750,000
Then there remains for letter postage to produce.....	2,650,000
	$4,400,000

Now the enquiry arises, how low can this rate of letter postage be reduced and furnish this annual amount of $2,650,000? The answer, I am well persuaded, is to be found in the data, which our own experience in this very matter furnishes.

But it may be satisfactory to show what effect upon revenue the reduction of the rate of postage has had in Great Britain, as well as in the United States. In Great Britain the former high rates averaged 7*d*. per single letter. This produced an annual revenue, in the last year of their operation, 1839, of £2,390,763 10*s* 1½*d*
The present rate is 1*d*. uniform, and the revenue it produced the first year, 1840, was 1,369,604 5 2

Loss of revenue..... 1,021,159 4 11½

Equal to..... $4,642,410 72

Here is a reduction in rate of 86 per cent., causing a decline in the aggregate of 42 7/10 per cent. After a lapse of seven years there still remains a decline of revenue of £386,755 15 ½, equal to

$1,871,897 83, or 16⅕ per cent. The decline, in net, is much greater than in their gross revenue; and I take this occasion to state that the whole mail packet service of Great Britain, as well the home as the foreign, is charged to the admiralty and not to the post office. In the publications of the day, this large item of mail expenditure is omitted, consequently an exaggerated net balance is exhibited in their post office statements. The net revenue of 1847 was but £67,459 3 8, after deducting the cost of their steam packet as well as other mail transportation.

I am gratified in being able to state that our own experiments furnish demonstrations in favor of low postage of a decidedly more encouraging character in respect to revenue. Prior to 1845, letter postage in the United States stood at various rates, averaging on the respective amounts they yielded 14½ cents the single letter. The revenue they produced, (I speak of letter postage revenue only,) the last year of their operation, 1845, was $3,660,181 38
Postage was reduced to our present 5 and 10 cent
rates, the first year's revenue of which, 1846, was 2,881,697 74

Loss in revenue..... 778,483 64

Being a reduction of 21⅕ per cent.

Now, the reduction in rate that produced this decline was 56⅓ per cent., the present 5 and 10 cent rates being averaged at 6⅔ cents per letter, according to a calculation (made on rather imperfect data to be sure) of the several amounts yielded by those rates respectively. The decline in revenue here is less, in proportion to the reduction of the rate, than it is in England by some 7 or 8 per cent. The next year's revenue, 1847, realized an advance upon that of 1846 of 10⅗ per cent.—5 per cent. represents the general progressive growth of the department, as it does the ratio of increase in the population of the United States—and there was consequently a recovery, from the first year's fall of revenue, to the extent of 5¾ per cent. But this ceased with the second year; for the increase of the revenue of 1848 over that of 1847 is but, in the ratio of the general increase of the department, about 5 per cent. It is still $309,877 28 less than the revenue of 1845. The foregoing statement is of letter postage exclusively.

We have seen that 56⅓ per cent. of reduction of the postage rate, causes a decline of 21⅕ per cent. in the revenue. A uniform 5 cent rate is 21 per cent. less than the present rates, averaged at 6⅔ cents. The reduction in revenue that 21 per cent. reduction in rate would produce, would be, according to the foregoing proportions, 7$\frac{9}{10}$ per cent.; and this proportion, deducted from last year's revenue, would leave $3,085,630 08. This is $435,630 08 more revenue for the next year than the preceding table calls for, and shows that the rate is higher than what the principles of low postage here assumed require. If Congress appropriates for postage on free matter only, or merely abolishes the franking privilege, the rate could be put at 5 cents uniform postage; but this would still involve a tax upon the letter postage payer to meet the sur-

plus expense of conveying newspapers and of the unproductive routes.

A uniform 3 cent rate is 52⅔ per cent. less than our present rates; and that per centage, according to the scale of reduction exhibited by the operations of 1845–'46, will cause a decline of revenue of 19⅘ per cent.

The revenue of last year.....	$3,350,304 10
Reduced 19⅘ per cent.	663,360 21
Leaves a letter postage revenue of.....	2,686,943 89

$2,650,000 is the amount desired. This demonstrates that a 3 cent uniform rate is sufficient, and barely sufficient, to raise an adequate amount of letter postage revenue, provided it is relieved of all charges and burthens beyond that of the cost of the transport of letters, including their delivery and other incidents.

As to a 2 cent rate, it is apparent, according to the tests of all our experience, that it would not yield the desired amount of revenue. Two cents is a trifle *less* than the English penny, according to the legal standard of the relative value of British and American coin. And in view of their advantages, especially in their high rates of foreign and transit postages which average, probably, 20 cents per letter, and amounted in 1847 to $3,023,976, we achieve a much more arduous undertaking, if successful, with the 3 cent rate than was accomplished by the British experiment. Considering the vastness of our territory and the magnitude of our system of mails, and the still greater extent to which it must be carried, 3 cents here will be a far cheaper rate, in comparison to service performed, than one penny in England.

There is one point not touched on in the foregoing calculations —the possibility that the present commissions to postmasters when cast on the reduced amount of revenue may not give sufficient compensation. But in respect to that we can do as before—wait and see. There will probably be a recovery on the second year from the fall of revenue of the first year, giving a proportion of increase beyond that of the regular growth of the department. And this may then afford the means of enlarging the commissions, if it shall be found necessary.

The same policy commends a uniform rate for newspapers, which I would put at our lowest denomination of coin—one cent the single newspaper, not to exceed two ounces in weight, where regularly issued to subscribers. Transient newspapers and pamphlets I would charge with the letter rate, if reduced to three cents, with this restriction in all cases, that the weight of the newspaper be limited to two ounces, and the pamphlet to three ounces, with power to the Postmaster General to classify small periodical pamphlets issued to subscribers with newspapers.

Our sea postage rates are confused and multifarious. There is a six cents postage on private ship letters, if delivered at the port, and two cents in addition to inland, if addressed elsewhere. There is a ten cent packet rate for the West India islands, or islands in the gulf of Mexico, and a specific rate of 12½ cents for letters to

and from Havana. Then there is a 20 cent rate to Chagres, 30 cents to Panama, and 40 cents to Astoria or other places on the Pacific, within the territory of the United States; and, finally, there is the 24 cent packet rate to the European ports. And the matter is made more complex by subjecting some of these rates to the additional charge of inland postage, and relieving others from it. Let all sea going letters pay one uniform rate—the same, whether conveyed by private ship or government packet, whether from or to the port, or an interior post office. It is important that the power should be possessed by the Executive of arranging with foreign countries uniform *transit* rates of postage, with the privilege of pre-paying.

Whilst it would promote convenience to have international arrangements that would allow of optional payment in either country, on the direct correspondence between them, still, that is not indispensable. But in respect to correspondence between two countries that must be conveyed across the territory of a third nation, there must be an international arrangement between that third country and one of the others, to enable the letter to reach its destination, unless the party has an agent in the intermediate country to pay, at least, the transit postage.

The super-addition of rates should be avoided. Let the ship postage pay from its departure and to its destination, wherever it may be in the United States. It is so much more satisfactory to the parties to know familiarly, in a stated amount, what the whole charge is, and the simplification of the accounts is alone a sufficient reason.

If government retains the prerogative of exclusive mail conveyance, it must provide for the transportation of unpaid as well as pre-paid matter. But it is wise to induce the pre-payment of postage. It better adjusts the expenditure between the parties; it simplifies the accounts, and lessens the labor of postmasters. Therefore, a postage of twice the amount of the pre-paid rate should be imposed on the letters of those who, instead of paying it themselves, put the government to the trouble of collecting it of the other party. This might be modified somewhat, the better to adapt it to our coin. On newspapers, it is preferable to have the postage paid at the office of delivery, for the support of which, in a vast number of cases, the commission on newspaper postage is indispensable.

II.—*Change in the mode of mailing letters and newspapers, bagging mails, and forwarding them to distant offices.*

Our forms, commencing with the post bill, are complicated; and yet the object for which they are made so is not obtained, for they provide no checks practically. They do not secure a thorough accountability on the part of the postmaster. A like feature of insecurity extends to our mode of bagging the mails, which gives all the postmasters and their clerks, on the route, access to the contents of the same bag. It is the purpose of distributing offices to consolidate the small mails from the various offices within their

district for distant points, into large ones, for that portion of the route common to them, with a view to more certain despatch and greater safety; and then, at the proper points, to separate them for their respective destinations; yet they have the effect in numerous cases to withdraw mails from their direct course, and otherwise to delay them, simply to be distributed; thus, in thousands of instances causing additional detentions, and creating an expense to the department in distribution commissions, for doing that which is an injury to the service. Numerous alterations and corrections have been made, and more attempted, but the defects are not removed. The scheme of bagging, forwarding, and accounting, are all based upon the plan of mailing, and there all the defects of our system have their root. Nothing but a radical change can reach them.

In the infancy of our post establishment, when the offices were few, it may have been possible, agreeably to the evident design of the arrangement, to compare at the General Post Office the post bills with the accounts of mails sent, and the accounts of mails sent of one office with the accounts of mails received of another, and vice versa. But this has become impracticable, and has been so, doubtless, for the last fifty years. In practice, therefore, we are without the desired checks to secure complete accountability on the part of the post offices. Our system was borrowed from the English. But theirs at this time possesses not a feature in the particulars referred to that corresponds to ours. After a longer experience, probably, of the defects we are now suffering, they at length abandoned the old system as incurable and adopted a new one.

Each post office in the kingdom of Great Britain (London, Edinburgh, and Dublin excepted) is furnished with a list of what is called its *corresponding* offices. These are usually some four or five, and it can mail to no others. The post bill contains but two items, the amount of paid letters and the amount of unpaid letters, entered by the mailing postmaster in two blanks provided for that purpose. The receiving postmaster counts the letters, and enters in two other blanks provided in the bill the amount of paid and unpaid, and signs it. If his entries disagree with the mailing postmaster's, his assistant countersigns, and the last entries are taken at the accountant's office as giving the true amounts. Here is a check at the outset. Each postmaster is furnished with a blank called a monthly voucher; one side is to contain the amount of all letters sent, arranged under the heads of his corresponding offices in columns of *paid* and *unpaid;* the other side the amount of all letters received under the heads of the corresponding offices from which received, in columns of paid and unpaid, and each entry is to be made opposite the date of mailing, as well on the received side as the sent side. As the offices from and to which each office receives and sends mails are designated, and are generally but few in number, there is no difficulty in keeping this account, and in comparing the accounts sent of one office with the accounts received of its corresponding office, and vice versa. Here is the second check. The first by the neighboring postmaster, the last by

the accountants at the General Post Office. These vouchers are sent in to the General Post Office after the expiration of each month, and with them only those post bills wherein there is a discrepancy between the entries of the mailing and the receiving postmaster. The examinations and corrections of errors are made on these vouchers, and at the end of the quarter the account is closed by a quarterly return from the postmaster, and the ledger entries at the General Post Office. What there is in the foregoing that we have not, is the principle of mailing to designated offices only, the simple form of the post bill, the principle and practice of the receiving postmaster checking upon the mailing postmaster, and an effectual comparison, by means of the monthly vouchers, between the accounts of mails sent and mails received, thus securing accountability by a complete system of checks.

But a post office must have letters to send to other post offices than its four or five corresponding offices. How are they, by the English regulations, to be mailed and forwarded? As follows: one or more of the corresponding offices of each office is designated as its *forwarding* office. If the letters to go beyond are paid, their amounts are entered on the post bill to the corresponding forward office, which enables it to check that amount, being a charge against the mailing postmaster. If they are unpaid, they are tied up with the other letters, but are not entered on the post bill. The paid letters, being fully checked, are sent on by the forward office, through the forward office of its circle of corresponding offices to their destination, without further post bill. The unpaid letters go forward from the mailing office, through its forward office, and so on, without post bill, until they reach the last forward office preceding their office of destination; at which they are placed under post bill, so as to raise an account against, and check upon the receiving postmaster. This is very unlike, but vastly preferable to, our unsatisfactory and expensive scheme of distribution offices.

The post bill in England is used solely with a view to the account, and not for the purpose of tracing, or identifying the letters, a use that is attempted here to be made of it, but which it is very ineffectual in accomplishing. In England they furnish a satisfactory record and trace for valuable letters in the mail by what is called *registration*. For a fee of 1*s*. sterling charged in addition to the postage, which, with the fee, is to be paid in advance, a record of the letter by its address is booked and a receipt given. It is described in full in an accompanying bill, specially noted on the post bill, and sent in such manner as to make it conspicuous in the mails. It is noted by special entries at each forwarding office, and when delivered a receipt is taken.

As to local letters received and delivered at the same office, the like checks are maintained in respect to them as to mailed letters. The sorter makes out a letter-bill for all he finds in the box, and the delivering clerk or letter carrier acknowledges their amount by entries in blanks provided for that purpose. This charges them in favor of the postmaster, and the postmaster in favor of the General Post Office. A monthly voucher is kept on the same prin-

ciples that have already been explained. It is sent in to the accountant, with all the letter bills; and the amounts they contain, after being corrected on examination, are placed in the quarterly return and charged on the ledger.

The mail bag, which is generally made of canvass, goes under seal, and is opened only at the office addressed. This is an incident to their scheme of mailing founded on the arrangement of corresponding and forwarding offices, and would be entirely impracticable with us, unless our mailing system was adapted to it.

As to London, and partially so as to Edinburgh and Dublin, the scheme of mailing and accounting is essentially different in some particulars from the foregoing; but as we have not in the United States any place that, like London, may be set down as the universally acknowledged and common centre in all respects, I will not trouble you with an account of their peculiarities, for they cannot with advantage be introduced into our arrangements. Our civil divisions are so different from those of Great Britain that we must, I am satisfied, devise a central system of post operations for the large offices in each of our States, rather than adopt the London arrangements.

The foregoing is but a hasty sketch of the characteristic points in the mode of performing the post office business in London. Much that is incidental and explanatory might be added; but, in this connexion, it would serve to confuse rather than elucidate.

The question is, shall we adopt that system? The difficulty lies at the outset. When the change is made, the duties of the offices will not only be better performed by the postmasters and their clerks, but with far more ease and despatch. The great work, in undertaking this change, consists in laying off the post offices of the United States into circles, so as to give to each one of our 16,159 post offices its specified list of corresponding and forward offices. Besides a thorough knowledge of the course of the mails, a particular knowledge of localities must be obtained, so that the mails shall be made by these arrangements to run in the channels of trade and business. It would require too long a statement to point out the complexity and magnitude of this labor. When I considered the number of our offices, as compared with those of Great Britain, which has but 1,776, (exclusive of receiving houses) —and nearly a third of them are only sub-offices—and the extent of the territory of our States, which is ten times as great as that of the United Kingdom, I distrusted the practicability of making this radical alteration, and keeping the circles of offices properly adjusted, amid the incessant changes going on among postmasters, sites of offices, and courses of routes; and the rapid increase, from year to year, of new offices and post-roads.

But the object to be obtained is too important to be abandoned. The improvement of our system can be accomplished in no other mode. Subsequent reflection has satisfied me that the difficulties can be overcome if sufficient time is allowed, and Congress makes a suitable provision to carry out the undertaking.

The prospect that uniform postage will soon be established ren-

ders the change more urgent. Our mode of performing post office business must be simplified, so as to be done with greater despatch and accuracy; and whilst every scheme of revenue should be provided with checks to insure accountability, that needs it most which is made up of small amounts; for there is a greater tendency to neglect and oversight arising from the indifference with which small sums are apt to be regarded, individually, though in the aggregate they swell to millions of dollars. The corresponding and forward system of mailing, as it may be technically called, has been an indispensable adjunct to low postage in England, bringing every penny paid for postage to the ledger of the accountant general, and giving the public the assurance that what has been so well earned has been faithfully accounted for.

That part of the post office system in England which is carried out in their London arrangements, called the central system, cannot be introduced here. In lieu of it, I would have a class of primary offices, to consist of one from each State—perhaps two or more in the larger States. The difference between them and the great body of offices would be, that they would be placed in direct correspondence with a far greater number of offices. Each primary office should post bill and bag mails to some of the other primary offices to be designated, and to all of the ordinary or second class offices within their State or district situated on the direct lines radiating from the primary offices. They should be listed for that purpose; and these offices, in turn, should mail direct to such primary office.

Out of the great body of offices I would form the second class offices, to embrace the chief portion of them; also, a third class, which I would call, as in England, sub-offices. Sub-offices neither keep nor render accounts. They get their supply exclusively from one office, which is called the principal office. The principal office sends out a post-bill headed, on one side, "outward," stating the account of the mail as despatched, with blanks in it for the sub-postmaster to make corrections—and the other side "inward," on which the sub-postmaster enters the account of his mails returned, with columns for the principal postmasters to make corrections. And in keeping the monthly vouchers of this account for himself, the principal postmaster keeps it also for the sub-postmaster, and renders it to the General Post Office. All such post-bills are to be sent in with the monthly voucher.

They have still another class in England, railway offices, occupied by two clerks at a time, at salaries ranging from £80 to £200 per annum, with an allowance of 10*s.* sterling per day each trip. Mails are made up to them as forward offices only; and as such, they make up mails to other offices, and check upon the mails received from other offices. They receive no postage, but render regular monthly vouchers to serve as checks upon postmasters in correspondence with them. There are advantages in this, in giving despatch, but gained at too great a cost. Another objection arising here would be, that our cars do not run with sufficient steadiness to enable so much clerkly duty to be peformed in them. To

secure equal despatch, and not increase the number of route agents, I suggest the following regulation: Where the party will pre-pay by means of a letter stamp, and will write on his letter "way," instruct the postmaster to put it in a way bag for the route agent, under a lock for which he is provided with a key, without post bill, for, the postage being paid by the stamp, a post bill is unnecessary in reference to the accounts. The agent can deliver it to the office addressed, by placing it in the pouch for said office. The postage stamp should not be obliterated in such a case, either by the postmaster sending, or by the route agent. It should be done by the receiving postmaster before he delivers it. The sending postmaster should keep and render a monthly voucher of way letters so sent, as necessary in the settlement of his commission account, and for other purposes. And the route agent should keep and render such a voucher likewise by way of check, a duty which he can easily perform. The postage stamp, and the direction of the writer to send his letter "way," will enable this facility of immediate despatch, without post bill, to be extended, under proper modifications, to other routes than railroads, and to late letters on the principal lines up to the last moment before departure. There is but one objection to this, the tendency of this class of letters to multiply to a number beyond the ability of the route agent to attend to and dispose of them. This facility has not been extended to the public at all in England, owing, doubtless, to this objection. When the evil apprehended manifests itself, it must be guarded against by proper restrictions. Letters of value and special importance should not, of course, be sent as "way," but go under the security afforded by regular mailing and bagging to the place of destination.

The division, then, of post offices would be:

1. Primary offices kept by postmasters.
2. Post offices kept by deputy postmasters.
3. Sub-offices kept by sub-deputies.

Mailing.—Adopting the simple form of the English post bill, we should add to it a third column for "amount of *postage stamped* letters." This will be necessary for the commission account, and for other important purposes, as we have no stamp office in the United States. I would have a uniform blank for post bills, and require the name of office and date to be filled by the office stamp —this adds to its authenticity—and, in all cases, that it be signed by the officer actually in charge of the mailing at the time, be he postmaster or clerk. In England, the post bill is colored. There are practical advantages in this—those from a primary office should be of one color; those to it of another; and those between ordinary offices of a third. The post bill should be filled with, 1st, amount of paid letters, being those only actually paid in money at the office; this is the admission of a debit. 2d, amount of unpaid letters; this is a charge against the corresponding postmaster. 3d, amount of postage stamped letters; this is merely a memorandum. The office dated stamp should be impressed on the right hand up-

per corner of every letter; and, underneath it, the paid stamp in red, if the postage has been paid in money at the office; and the rate stamp in black, if an unpaid letter. Mails will only be made up to the offices listed as the corresponding offices; and, for distant places, to such of them as are distinguished as the forward office, as hereinbefore described. Of the unpaid letters, care will be taken to enter in the post bill only those for the delivery of the office mailed to, omitting, from the post bill, those that are to be forwarded beyond. The items of each post bill, with its date, should be entered on the sent side of the monthly voucher, under the head of the office mailed to.

Office stamps should be provided for every office in the United States. They are better for being made of wood, because more tenacious of the ink, and far cheaper. They should be used on all letters sent or received, and in filling up blanks of dates in post bills, notices and returns. They should be reset each day with the proper date, and in the large offices, reset after the first mail has gone out, with the addition of A under the date, and after the second mail has gone out, with B. This will serve to settle many disputes whether a letter was handed in in time for the out going mail. And on the office day memorandum book it should be stamped every time as reset, to furnish evidence of that fact. It would be an improvement to have the year in the stamp, as well as the day of the month. Letters mailed should be stamped as above stated, on the right hand upper corner, and letters received in the mail should be stamped also on the back.

Bagging.—As locks and keys are already obtained at great expense, and as mails can be closed and opened by means of them with much greater dispatch than when tied, sealed, and stamped, we had better continue in the use of the lock and key. In respect to mails for distant points, we might adopt the English practice of sealing and stamping. This, in view of the possibility of surreptitiously obtaining keys, and of making false ones, I consider the safest. This form of mailing will require a bag for each office. It should be labelled with the names of the two offices between which it plies, and retained exclusively for their use. The primary office mails should go and return under the large brass lock; the forward office mails under the small brass lock, and all other mails under the iron lock.

Receiving mails.—The mail bag, on being opened, should be turned inside out, and made of such form and materials that it can be readily done. The entire paid and postage stamped letters will be counted, and respective amounts entered in the receiving postmaster's column, and such of the unpaid as are for his delivery; if the amounts agree with the entries of the mailing postmaster, the bill will be retained for about a year, and then destroyed. If they disagree, the bill will be sent with the monthly voucher to the General Post Office. The letters that are to be forwarded will be sent on, if paid or postage stamped, without post bills, simply

by tying them up with the matter for the proper office; if unpaid, with a post bill, if the letters are addressed to a corresponding office; otherwise not. Every letter for delivery should be impressed on its back with the office dated stamp, to show when it was received. The amounts in the post bill, according to the receiving postmaster's count, he will enter on the received side of the monthly voucher, opposite to the date of the bill, and under the head of the mailing office. Of mis-sent, re-directed, and dead letters I will speak hereafter.

Newspapers.—The practice of the English post office furnishes no regulation suitable for this country, as to the mode of mailing newspapers and accounting for their postage. There, government receives its remuneration for conveying newspapers in the mail, in a stamp duty of one penny on each newspaper; and, as every newspaper published pays the stamp, it is immaterial what number of them is placed in the mails. Foreign newspapers are subject to specific postage rates, varying from ½*d.* to 4*d.*; but these are mailed as letters. They impose, also, a specific postage of 1*d.* on newspapers handed into an office to be delivered from the same, but this amounts to what it was intended for—a prohibition—to prevent publishers from using the penny post as their carriers. In France, newspaper postage is 4 centimes (⅘ of a cent) on a sheet of small dimensions, and it must be pre-paid. In Germany, it is ¼ of the letter rates, for the distance according to weight.

Transient newspapers should be mailed and forwarded as letters. As to those regularly issued through the mails to subscribers, a plan should be devised that will enable an account of them to be kept and checked, but which will not subject them to be overhauled singly for the purpose of mailing on each despatch of the mails. The practice of calling on publishers for a list of the number of papers sent by them to each post office has become obsolete, from their neglect and refusal to furnish it. I beg leave to suggest the following regulations: every post office where a newspapr is published should, in the course of the first month of each quarter, have a special and minute mailing of all newspapers sent from it made at least once, though at the hazard of losing despatch by the outgoing mails of the day on which this mailing is done, for the purpose of taking a full list of the newspapers sent, giving the names of the post offices alphabetically arranged, and the number of newspapers sent to each, with the frequency of their issue, whether weekly, semi-weekly, tri-weekly, or six times a week. As the result of this, a voucher of newspapers sent should be transmitted to the auditor of the department, soon after the expiration of the first month of each quarter. Every office in the United States should immediately after the expiration of the first month of each quarter send a voucher of newspapers received, showing the number of newspapers *received* thereat, and the post office from which received, alphabetically arranged, with an additional statement exhibiting what number are delivered free, and what number are refused to be taken out, giving the names of those refusing, and the names

and offices of those receiving free. As the postage is to be taken at the commencement for the entire quarter, these reports will enable a complete account to be kept upon returns from the sending and receiving postmaster, checking upon each other, of the whole newspaper postage for the quarter. The additional statement will enable credit to be given the receiving postmaster for the number of free and refused newspapers. By this means, the overhauling of the newspapers before each departure of the mail will be avoided, except on one day in each quarter. Carefully prepared blanks should be provided for the above returns; and blank notices, to be filled up and sent in by each postmaster that he has no newspaper return of either kind to make, whenever that is the case. In a newspaper postage journal, or journals, in the auditor's office, or in the dead letter bureau, the newspaper returns could be duly collated and ready for comparison on the coming in of the postmaster's monthly voucher, or quarterly return. And, with said quarterly return, should be sent an additional voucher of newspapers sent; also, of newspapers received, where newspapers have been sent or received during the quarter, in addition to those already reported.

Accounts.—The first exhibit is the monthly voucher, to be sent in soon after the end of the month. I have already described it. I would make this addition: a column for amount of postage stamped letters. If the office is in correspondence with a primary office, it returns two monthly vouchers for posted letters—for those sent to and received from such primary office, and for those sent to and received from all other post offices. If it be an office having a sub-office, then a third monthly voucher of letters will be required. There should be also a fourth monthly voucher for local letters. Fifthly, a newspaper voucher received for the first month of each quarter, and followed up in the third with an additional newspaper voucher; and, sixthly, a monthly voucher of missent and re-directed letters, overcharged covers and receipts, and dead letters. This voucher requires a more particular description.

The accounts thus far described fix the liability of the postmaster, not only for the postage pre-paid to him in money, but also for the unpaid letters coming to his office. Some of these may have been missent, some misdirected, some overcharged, and some remain on hand uncalled for. How is he to get credit for them? By this monthly voucher of missent, re-directed, overcharged, and dead letters. The process is as follows: On missent or misdirected letters, received at an office, that fact is entered in red ink on their face. They are then mailed forward, in their true direction, with an appropriate post bill, and the examination of the same by, and signature of, the receiving postmaster will constitute the check. On overcharged letters, the fact and amount of overcharge is to be entered on the covers, and they retained, or receipts taken from the parties of the amount refunded, and allowance for overcharge will be made only to the extent shown by the covers and receipts. Such overcharges, and the amounts of re-directed letters, will be

entered on the monthly voucher, as should be also that of the dead letters returned; and the present very objectionable provisions of law, respecting dead letters, should be so modified as to allow of the following arrangement:

Dead letters.—A letter uncalled for remains in the office till the end of the quarter, and is then advertised; and not till the expiration of three months from the time advertisement commences can it be sent to the General Post Office as a dead letter; and then it is possible for it to remain on hand three months longer, before reached in its turn and opened. So that a letter of value may be in the post office and dead letter office nine months before it is returned to the writer. This is wrong. I would advise the following: Primary offices, and such other post offices of the larger class as may be so instructed, should make return of dead letters on the 1st and 15th of each month; all other post offices on the 1st of each month. When letters are refused, or the persons addressed are "dead" or "gone away, not known where," they are to be sent to the dead letter office on the first return day without being advertised. But in each case the cause should be written in red ink across the face of the letter. In all other cases, the letters on hand at the expiration of the fortnight or the month, (except those received by the last mails,) are to be immediately advertised, and those still remaining by the next return day are to be transmitted to the dead letter office. Letters left in an office to be sent, but which cannot be mailed from the illegibility of the address, or having no address, or being addressed to a foreign country without postage being pre-paid, should be immediately enclosed to the dead letter office, having written upon them in red ink "cannot be mailed."

A blank should be provided called the "account of missent, re-directed, and dead letters, overcharged covers and receipts, for the month of ———," and in its columns, opposite the proper dates and under the name of the post offices to which the re-directed letters are sent, should be entered the amounts. The dead letters are entered by their number and amounts opposite the dates on which they are sent to the dead letter office. The post bills that accompany the re-directed matter should be sent by the receiving postmaster to the dead letter office. I will here remark that, in view of the increase of duties these arrangements would impose upon that office, its force should be considerably increased. The principal officer, who might be called the inspector of dead letters, will be the examiner of all claims of credit for re-directed and dead letters and overcharges; he should have charge of the correspondence as to missing, lost, and returned letters; and might with great propriety have charge of the newspaper journal, and the examination of the accounts of newspaper postage. I will here state, that in my examinations in the dead letter office in London, I found that, notwithstanding their cheap rates and pre-payment of postage, there was returned 1,579,762 dead letters and newspapers, for the year ending 5th January, 1847. The postage on

the letters (1,078,362 in number) amounted to £7,643, of which £341 3*s*. 10*d*. was paid; and that there were in those letters £507,574 6*s*. 7*d*. in bills, and £8,959 10*s*. 9*d*. in cash. The number of dead letters in France is nearly 3,000,000 per annum.

Quarterly returns.—These should be made up and sent in, with the last monthly vouchers of the quarter, immediately after its expiration. The quarterly return should contain a debit,—

1. For the primary office letters, stated in three amounts by months;
2. For post office letters, generally stated in the same way;
3. For local letters, also, stated in the same way;
4. For newspapers, as per first return;
   Do. as per additional return;
5. For ship letters;
6. For postage stamps.

The return will take credit,—

1. By returned letters and overcharges;
2. By refused and free newspapers;
3. By commission on letter and newspaper postage collected at the office;
4. By commission on amount of postage stamped letters sent;
5. By gratuities for ship letters;
6. By incidental allowances.

The ledger should be drawn up to correspond, and so as to exhibit on one page the accounts of each post office for the year. And they might, as in the British post office, be made up of printed blanks, leaving nothing to enter in manuscript but the amounts; thus saving the time of the clerk for more important duties, and insuring greater accuracy.

A more general use of printed blanks would much improve the service; and in view of the great multiplication of letters and increase of duties that low postage will produce, will have to be resorted to as a necessary labor-saving facility. In England, they are provided, of an uniform kind, for every species of notice, return or voucher. The account books are made up of printed blank sheets; and even envelopes for accounts, dead letters, &c., with printed addresses, are furnished to the postmasters. This goes far to insure despatch and accuracy.

Registration.—I would adopt the English plan for furnishing evidence of the mailing and receipt of valuable letters; providing special means for tracing them in the mails; and giving greater security in mailing and forwarding them. This is easily accomplished, if we adopt their general mode of mailing. But the attempt to engraft it upon our present system will prove a failure and a deception. I have already described the process of registration. If made to answer the purpose designed, it will greatly benefit the public; it will somewhat improve the revenues. The registration fee in England is equal to 24 cents, besides the post-

age; and I was told that the number of letters in that country that paid this high charge was very great, being used in cases of payments, legal notices, and in many other instances where the evidence or the assurance was desired that the information sent was brought home to the other party.

As to compensation of postmasters, our present mode, by commissions, is decidedly preferable, in my judgment, to the English, which is by specified salaries. Commissions are best suited to a changing and growing system, as they always proportion the remuneration to the amount of business done. But I see no good reason for a separate commission on newspaper postage. Let the accounting be simplified by having but one set of commission rates, embracing both letters and newspapers. And if a class of sub-offices should be authorized, the commissions for the sub-deputies, in consideration of their being relieved of the keeping and rendering of accounts, might with justice be put at less rates than those of other postmasters.

Uniform rates, and pre-payment of postage, will greatly facilitate the business of mailing and accounting. In Great Britain a pre-paid letter, not exceeding a half ounce in weight, is sent through the mail, to any part of the kingdom, at their *minimum* rate, and the unpaid letters at double that rate. This discrimination ensures pre-payment in most cases; and it is further aided by a legal provision that subjects the writer to the payment of the postage, and to prosecution therefor, if necessary, in all cases where his letter is refused by the person addressed. In Germany the writer is equally liable to pay the postage on his refused letter. The English scale of progression is somewhat peculiar. It counts the half ounce but once. When the letter exceeds an ounce, be it ever so small an excess, it is subject to four rates of postage, as much so as if it weighs two ounces; so, if it exceeds two ounces, it pays six rates, the same as if it amounts to three ounces in weight. This scale simplifies the business at the offices, and counteracts the tendency to make up large letters, which sometimes runs into an abuse.

III.—*Railroad mail service.*

In France the right of sending the mails by railway, free of charge, is secured in the charters of incorporation; and in Germany, both the mails of the prince of Thurn and Taxis, and of the several governments, are conveyed, free of cost, over the railways of that country. In England the railway companies are bound under heavy penalties to take the mails at such hours and speed as the postmaster general shall prescribe. And as to compensation, if they and the postmaster general cannot agree upon it, it is to be decided by arbitrators chosen by each, and an umpire appointed by them, if necessary. The prices paid by the British post office vary from 1*d.* to 2*s.* 9*d.* the single mile. 1*d.* the single mile, as the English count distance, is equal to $14 72 per mile per annum, daily service, as we state it. The 2*s.* 9*d.* compensation is

equivalent to $451 93½ per mile per annum, daily service. The cause of this enormous difference is best explained in the language of the secretary of the British post office, Colonel Maberly: "Some trains (he says) are run in the middle of the night, when they would not have a passenger to convey; others are run at hours when they are full of passengers. In the one case you would get very excellent terms; in the other you would be obliged to pay very high, because you must pay the expense of the train, the police, the night establishment, and every other expense incident to your order." We have no such service performed in this country as here described. I find, notwithstanding this extravagant award of $451 93½ per mile per annum in favor of the North Union Railway Company, that the price paid for railroad mail conveyance in England in 1847 averages, according to the best data I could obtain, $13\frac{2}{10}$ cents for each single mile. The railroad mail service in the United States stands for the last year at the average of $13\frac{49}{100}$ cents per single mile.

I believe we would have better service performed between the post offices and the depots, especially at the large cities, and make more satisfactory arrangements with the companies, if we were to confine their service to the rails, as in Great Britain. And if the department were to construct its own railroad cars, a proper deduction being made in the companies' pay, it would have suitable apartments for its mails and agents, on other railroads than those between Washington and Philadelphia. The mode of settling prices for railway mail service by arbitration is, I am persuaded, unfavorably regarded in England, a searching investigation having been set on foot into one of these awards through a parliamentary committee, and great reluctance since having been manifested in getting up any more arbitrations. In reference to the vexed questions of railroad compensation with which this department is annoyed, I humbly ask, why are not the committees of Congress, and Congress itself, the best arbitrators? Let the department send in its estimate, specifying the compensation for each road; let it be heard in explanation, and the companies in opposition, if they desire; and in the appropriation act for the service of the department, let a schedule be referred to or incorporated, which will settle each case and leave no chance to dispute afterwards what the law is in the matter. The absolute power of the British postmaster general over railways enables him to fix departures and arrivals at hours that best suit the public convenience, in respect solely to their mails. Instead of their chief mails being despatched, as ours are from New York at 4½ in the afternoon, they are not permitted to leave London till 9 and 10 at night, thus allowing ample time for the preparation of correspondence after the business of the day is over, and ample time to mail it after it is deposited in the office. On the same principle the mails are brought into London at from 3 to 5 o'clock in the morning, giving sufficient time at the office to open, assort, and prepare them for delivery at the earliest business hours of the day. For want of such power such arrangements are impossible here, wherever the companies find it is not for their in-

terests, in reference to the best accommodation of the travel, to run at night.

IV.—*Mail contracts.*

In France and Germany they are made at fixed prices; being, in France, a certain allowance for each horse and each driver for each six miles of travel; and in Germany, an allowance per mile for the ordinary service, with a share of the profit on extra work, and a nominal allowance for each horse kept and used, which, however, is afterwards modified, according to circumstances, so as to be sufficient to pay expenses and give a proper rate of interest on capital and gratuities to postillions, that are very specially provided for in their arrangements, even to the item of "beer money." Contracts are given, with sureties for faithful performance, and for a certain term of years, varying from four to six. On the continent, passengers are conveyed by the post departments. Not so in Great Britain; that is there exclusively the business of the mail contractors. On the principal routes, the department obtains the coaches of one set of contractors, the coach builders; and the service of horsing the coaches and conveying the mails in them of another, called the mail contractors, with privilege to them to convey a limited number of passengers at their own profit. Contracts in Great Britain are let on full competition, and for a term of years; but do not expire at the time set, unless the department or the contractor gives three months' previous notice; nor does it cease at any subsequent time, but upon such notice, except in case of death of the contractor, or its annulment by the Postmaster General for default, disobedience of orders, or insolvency, which can be ordered at any time for those causes. The highest contract price for building and keeping coaches in repair was, in 1847, $1\frac{3}{16}d.$ per single mile, the lowest $\frac{4}{6}\frac{3}{4}d.$ per single mile. This would amount at the maximum to $17 84 per mile per annum, daily service; and at the minimum to $9 89 per mile per annum, daily service. The contract prices for horsing and conveying the mails varied from 0 to 6*d.* per single mile. Competition for the business of transporting travel has reduced the average price of coach service below that of their horse or cart posts, and much below what similar transportation costs on the continent; but, then, in France and Germany the department derives revenues on such routes from passenger fare as well as postage. The English mail contracts are of the same general character with ours. The duties of the contractors, and the powers of the Postmaster General, are stated with much more particularity; for instance, it is stipulated that one team of horses shall not be driven so far as to become necessary to water them; and that a coachman shall not be confined to a single stage, but shall drive as great an extent of the road as the Postmaster General shall prescribe.

The power of ordering the dismissal of a driver, which is reserved in our contracts, is extended in theirs to the horses and every part of the establishment. They reserve to the Postmaster General the power of substituting another contractor for cause,

without annulling the contract; of charging expenses incurred in procuring substitute service; and of forfeiting the pay accruing since the last pay-day, where the contractor has been in default and dismissed. The contracts for the rural posts and other inferior service are made by the surveyor of the district, and in his name, acting in behalf of the Postmaster General. A right of appeal is given to the Postmaster General from the decisions of the surveyor against the contractor under the reserved powers in the contract. I do not see that the power to make deductions, in the nature of a fine, for delays and failure, as is done in our contracts, is given in the English mail contracts. It is specially reserved in the German contracts, and the fines are appropriated to the post poor fund. In France, the punishment is to place the driver who falls behind his time at the foot of the roll which is kept of all drivers, with a view to their promotion; and if the fault continues, reduce him to a route yielding an inferior compensation. It would be an improvement to have the contracts, instead of terminating all at one time in each section, to end on different years, so that an entire service of one-quarter of the Union may not be left to the hazards incident to a new set of contractors.

V.—*City Posts.*

An immense post office business is done in London and Paris, in transporting letters from one part of the city to another. 450 letter carriers are employed in Paris; and as my memoranda show, 1,367 in London, (at a pay of from 15*s.* to 30*s.* sterling per week,) besides superintendents, surveyors, inspectors, clerks, sorters, subsorters, and messengers, connected with the same branch of service. It is estimated that the number of letters in circulation in the delivery of London, exclusive of those of the general post, was, in 1847, over thirty-three millions. It is a great mistake which some have fallen into, that this service is done without charge to the citizen, he pays as much postage for a letter conveyed from one street to the next in London, as from Land's End to the Orkneys, viz: one penny. In Paris, the city postage was, in 1847, three sous. Letters are delivered ten times a day in London, and from six to two in its environs, extending twelve miles from the general post office. In Paris, the deliveries are made seven times a day. A complicated and extensive organization is devoted to this business, embracing sub-offices, receiving houses, and *accelerators*. From it a large revenue is derived; and it is further used to collect letters for the general post, and to deliver the letters which have come through the mails, without any additional charge. The city post business in the United States is performed chiefly by private enterprize, at the rate of three or four cents, which the law imposes, or at the English rate of 1*d.*, (2 cents;) individuals can underbid the government for this business, and there is no legal prohibition. To compete with them successfully, not only must the city postage be reduced, but the department must get up like arrangements to those of London and Paris. The plan you have in contemplation,

of re-organizing the carrier service, with sub-offices and receiving houses, accomplishes all purposes, so far as public accommodation is concerned, at a cost to the citizen of one cent the letter, which is two-thirds less than in Paris, one-half less than in London, and from one-half, to two-thirds or three-fourths less than our present city rate. The objection is that it sacrifices all revenue from city post letters, but all, that we have hitherto obtained, has been insufficient to meet the cost of their conveyance. It will not effect a free delivery of general post letters. But that is an extra accommodation, rendered after the letter has performed its regular circulation through the mails; and before it is extended, either exclusively to the citizen who lives within easy access to the office, or to all whether far or near, our first efforts, it appears to me, should be devoted to the more needed and more equal reform of reducing postage, on matter within the mail, to its minimum.

VI.—*The franking privilege*

is abolished in Great Britain; but members of Parliament are entitled to receive, free of charge, petitions addressed to either House, provided they are sent without covers, or in covers open at the sides, and do not exceed the weight of 32 ounces. Addresses to the queen likewise go free of postage. In France the franking privilege is extended by order of the minister of finance to certain public officers, for their official correspondence only. In the German States the king and royal family and postmaster general enjoy the franking privilege; government officers possess it for their official correspondence, and the postmaster general is authorized to extend it to societies for the promotion of science and arts and benevolent objects; but their correspondence must pass unsealed.

VII.—*Money order office.*

On the continent special provisions are made for the conveyance of money through the mail, the department insuring it. The French charges amount to an average of 5 per cent. on the deposit of coin, and an order payable at any of the offices in France will be given for such deposit, at a charge of 5 per cent., with a stamp tax, if the order is over 10 francs, equal to 7 cents. In Germany the like facilities are furnished by the mails either for forwarding the money in specie or by an order, at a complex scale of charges founded on their postage rates, gold and drafts being placed at half the charge of silver. In England orders are not given for a larger amount than £5 and the charge is 3*d.* for orders of £2 and less, and 6*d.* for orders over. This facility for transmitting small sums is used in Great Britain to an enormous extent, the transactions amounting in 1847 to £14,115,153 19*s.* 9*d.* sterling. I was told that in 1837 it occupied the time of but three clerks, and now nearly three hundred officers and clerks are employed at the principal office in Aldersgate street, and it has a branch in every considerable post office in the kingdom. I brought with me a complete and voluminous

set of all the forms and blanks, but believing it unsafe to connect such operations with our present defective mode of mailing, forwarding, and accounting, I have deemed it premature even to enter upon the discussion whether it would be expedient and proper to establish such an institution in connexion with the Post Office Department.

VIII.—*Miscellaneous matters.*

I find the following features common to the mail establishments of Great Britain and the continent:

1. A fiscal officer, not subordinate to the head of the department, to act as treasurer, and to check upon the accounts of the Postmaster General. In England, I saw that the accounts kept in detail were in the charge of an officer appointed by the Postmaster General, called the accountant general. The fiscal officer first referred to, who is commissioned by the lords of the treasury, is styled the receiver general.

2. Guards to accompany the mails, furnished by the department with fire arms, livery, and a chronometer, to be returned when their service ceases. The wages are half a guinea a week in England, with permission to solicit fees from passengers. On the railways they receive £70 a year, advanced to £100 on the third year of service, to £115 on the tenth, and to £130 on the fifteenth.

3. Registration of letters for an extra charge, on the continent called *recommended* letters. In case of their loss no indemnification is made by the English post office, but there is by some of the German post establishments, to the extent of twenty thalers in each case.

4. The delivery of letters by letter carriers, and their prompt return to the dead letter office when the party addressed cannot be found, except those marked "*poste restante*," or "to be kept till called for."

5. The limitation of letters by weight. In England the single letter cannot exceed one-half an ounce—in France, one-fourth of an ounce—in Germany, three-fourths of a loth—now changed, under a decree of the recent postal congress at Dresden, to a loth, which is half an ounce.

6. The conveyance of money by mail under special regulations, [see money order office.]

7. A division of post offices into at least two classes—those that account to the general post office, and those that do not. In France and Germany, one office alone for a district receives the accounts of all the offices of that district, and renders those accounts with its own to the general office. In Great Britain, it is only those that are subordinate in other respects that render their accounts to another office instead of the general office; and this is the division into principal and sub-offices that the growth of our department will compel us eventually to adopt. If, with this division of the post offices, a similar one should be made as to the routes, arranging the inferior ones into a subordinate class, to be

attended to under specific instructions by certain postmasters or local agents designated for the purpose, both in contracting for the service and in supervising it, great relief would be afforded to the auditing branch and to the contract office.

8. The most general mode for paying postmaster's funds or balances is by remittances through the mail—a mode I consider inferior to ours.

Having stated what arrangements are common to the several European systems, I will now refer to such as are peculiar to each.

In London, they have no postmaster. They substitute for that officer a superintending president of inland and foreign mails—salary £700, and a superintending president of district posts—salary the same. Everything coming and going through the mails falls under the charge of the former, and whatever of mail matter originates, and is delivered, within the populous circuit of the London delivery, extending 12 miles in each direction from the office at St. Martin's le Grand, is under that of the latter; the one accounting with every mail, and the other every day to the accountant general. I witnessed the making up and despatch of the evening mail. The operation was superintended by two presidents. There was said to be 800 persons on duty, but there were, apparently, about 500 in the rooms. They had a powerful coadjutor in a steam engine, that performed the labor of conveying the messengers with their mail bags between the first and second stories, and transporting packages between the district post and mailing offices, occupying the opposite wings of the building. At 6 o'clock, p. m., the windows were closed against all letters and newspapers, except those accompanied by the late fee of 1*d.* and ½*d.*, till 7, p. m., and 6*d.* till ½ past 7. From the elevated desks of the presidents, I saw the stamping, the obliterating of the postage stamps, the sorting of the letters to the route desks, the counting up of the amount of the *pre paid* by the mailing clerks, as a check against the returns of the receivers, the post billing of the *unpaid*, the tying up, the wrapping, and the bagging. The great numbers, and the activity of the scene, made it one, apparently, of indescribable confusion; yet each had his allotted part, and all cases of doubt and questions of discretion were brought to the presidents and promptly answered; and so nicely was this multifarious and immense labor adjusted to the time set, that, as the last bag passed through the door the clock struck 8, and the four immense rooms, so thronged and busy, were at once deserted and silent. 260,000 letters and newspapers was the probable number that left the office on that occasion. But, before they did so, the account of this vast amount of matter was prepared, checked, completed, and on its way to the accountant general, and the money collected by the receivers and window clerks, accompanied by a verified statement, was paid over to the receiver general.

The uniform rate of postage, and the discrimination in favor of pre-payment, by a difference of one-half of the charge, are peculiarities, as yet, of the British post office; though, after the 1st January next, a similar reform will go into operation in France.

Their present twelve rates of letter postage, being 2 sous for the first 25 miles, (English,) with an advance of 2 sous for each additional prescribed distance, will then be superseded by the uniform charge of 4 sous; which, according to our legal standard of values, is equal to 3 72.100 cents.

The German scale of postages, though somewhat variant in the different States, assimilates generally to that of Prussia, which commences with a rate for the first two miles, equal to about $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles English, of 1 silver groschen, equal to $2\frac{1}{2}$ cents, increasing by a groschen for each interval of from 5 to 10 miles, German, with an intervening half rate. A reform in postages has been decreed by a recent postal congress at Dresden, fixing two rates in substitution of the foregoing; one of 5 kreutzers, (old German convention money,) about equal to 5 cents, for any distance not exceeding 95 miles, (English,) and the other, 10 kreutzers, or cents, for any distance over.

The following are quite anomalous: In France, I was informed, the postmaster, instead of giving bond with sureties, deposits with government the required amount. He draws from it, while in office, a moderate interest, less than the commercial rate, and receives back the deposit on retiring from office, provided he has faithfully accounted for and paid over all dues to the government. In Prussia, the general post office opens accounts with the postmasters only for the letters they receive and deliver. The amounts pre-paid on letters sent are accounted for by the sending postmaster to the receiving and delivering postmaster, who is held liable therefor by the general office. In Austria, where the posting of travellers is, as elsewhere on the continent, a part of the post office monopoly, the postmaster is prohibited from furnishing conveyance, unless the party exhibits a posting ticket from the State chancery, giving permission to travel.

But the greatest anomaly of the present day is the Thurn and Taxis posts. This constitutes the only *general* post office power of Germany. It is held as an hereditary fief, granted by the Emperor Matthias to the Count de Taxis, in 1616—re-established and confirmed, after Buonaparte had abolished it, by the congress of Vienna. Its central office is at Frankfort, with postmasters and offices in the different German towns, separate and independent of the local mail establishments. It compels the railroads to carry its mails for nothing, as a part of the restitution which it holds that modern improvements should make for infringing upon its prescriptive rights, in furnishing a better mode for public travel than existed two centuries ago. Its attributes are those of a private monopoly; and it is managed so as to make the largest possible income for its affluent proprietor, the Prince of Thurn and Taxis.

IX.—*Organization of Foreign Post Departments.*

In the chief feature of its organization, and in its relative importance at home, the British post office widely differs from those

on the continent. In France, and in the German States, the post office is but a branch of the Treasury Department. The directeur general at Paris is a bureau officer under the minister of finance. But in Great Britain, as in the United States, the post office constitutes one of the great departments of the executive government. The Postmaster General is a member of the cabinet, holding a seat in the House of Peers. Thus, through its head, it is connected with the political power of the nation; and is directly subjected, through the same channel, to the influences of the popular will, so far as their form of government will allow. But to prevent it from being made a party engine, all interference with, or participation even in the elections on the part of any officer, postmaster or other subordinate, is prohibited by law under severe penalties. All appointments, from the principal officers and postmasters down to the letter carriers and mail guards, are ordered by the Postmaster General; though in respect to the principal officers and postmasters, the appointment is made on the nomination of the lords of the treasury. In France, the principal appointments of postmasters and other officers are made by the minister of finance, with the consent of the council. The directeur general recommends in such cases, and makes the appointments himself of the inferior class of postmasters and subordinates. In the German States, appointments in the principal class are made by the king; in the inferior, by the Postmaster General. In England, the tenure of office is "during pleasure," and not for life, as some have erroneously supposed, or even "during good behavior;" removals, however, are never ordered but for an assigned cause. And as to promotions, I find the following memorandum made at the general post office in London:—"The clerks are promoted in rotation, provided they are reported by the head of the office to which they belong to be competent to take the higher situation, and provided their official conduct is such as to warrant the promotion. The head of each office is selected on account of his ability and fitness, not by rotation. The first clerk, however, is appointed, if qualified."

The entire business of the Post Office Department of Great Britain is done in the name of the Postmaster General. The chief functionary for the transaction of this business is the secretary, whose salary is £2,000 a-year. There is an assistant secretary at £800, and a solicitor of the department, now receiving the same salary as the postmaster general, £2,500, but whose successor is to receive but £1,500 per annum. The following are the bureau officers:—superintendent of mail coach office, salary £900; receiver general, appointed by the lords of the treasury, £800; accountant general, £600; president of the money order office, £500; and inspector of dead and returned letters, £400. There are central offices for Scotland and Ireland respectively, at Edinburgh and Dublin, subordinate to that at London and on a smaller scale. Transactions with the chancellor of the exchequer and secretary for foreign affairs, in respect to postal arrangements with other countries, and matters of appointments belong to the files of the

secretary to the postmaster general and those of his private secretary. The former is a post now filled by, and created for, I believe, the celebrated Rowland Hill. The salaries of the clerks range from £80 to £500 per annum. As to the salaries of postmasters, the highest in England (Liverpool) is £1,000, ($4,840,) and the lowest is £30 a year, ($145 20.) Receiving postmasters get £3, some instances £5, and in one case as high as £15. In France and Germany the higher grades of salaries range much lower than in England; but I am unable to give them with precision.

X.—*Historical.*

The post office had no existence, as an institution for general use, till towards the close of the fifteenth century. The establishment of posts we can trace as far back as the Persian empire, and the reign of Darius the I. The correspondence between Julius Cæsar and Cicero makes memorable those established by the great triumvir between Britain and Rome. His skill in such arrangements, acquired probably whilst surveyor of the Appian Way, gave them a speed unsurpassed in modern times, till the introduction of steam. Augustus and his successors maintained them on a larger scale. But their character is indicated by the fact that the head of this mail establishment was the captain of the Prætorian guard. They were courier despatches between the government and the army. Military *posts* furnished the relays that performed the service; and whether they did not also confer their name upon it, is a matter that the lexicographers, who derive it from the past participle of a Latin verb, may have yet to settle with the historians. Posts of a like character the Spanish adventurers found under the Incas of Peru. The university of Paris, and the affluent merchants of Italy and Germany, following the example of their governments, sent their own messengers for the conveyance of letters. But with the dawn of liberty in the Italian states, and especially in the duchy of Milan, the post office first entered upon the duty of serving the citizen as well as the government. And the comprehensive genius of Charles the V. systematized it for his vast dominions on the basis of public and social accommodation. He created the first postmaster general known to history in the person of Leonard, count of Taxis.

The post office was introduced into England from Italy; but under ecclesiastical auspices. The nuncio was the chief functionary. It was but little used in this form; and was at length flung aside as one of the papal encroachments. The office of postmaster general in England enjoys the honor of being created by Elizabeth, who conferred it upon Thomas Randolph, a gentleman of distinction in the foreign service of the queen, where he had acquired, as we may presume, a knowledge of the mail establishments of the continent.

It is a notable circumstance that, in the 17th century, the post office establishment was given away in Germany as a feudatory monopoly to the family of Taxis; in France, it was set up at auc-

tion and farmed out for a term of years, and so continued till near the close of the 18th century, 1791. And the same disposition was made of it during the commonwealth in England. In the reign of Queen Ann, the post office department for the British empire was re-organized under a statute of parliament that embraced the American colonies, and provided for the establishment of one chief letter office in New York, with others in convenient places in the other provinces.

But it was long anterior to this, as early as the reign of Charles the II., that the popular movements brought the post office into existence in America as a convenience of the people; a character in which it had never originated in any nation or country before. A post office was established in Boston under John Heyward, by the colonial court in 1677; and, in Philadelphia under Henry Waldy, by order of William Penn, in 1683. The Virginia assembly gave Mr. Neal a patent as Postmaster General in 1692, which never went into effect. But in 1700, Colonel John Hamilton, of New Jersey, obtained a patent from the colonial government for a post office scheme for the whole country, which he carried into successful operation and for which he obtained indemnity from the English government, when it was superseded by the statute of Ann, in 1710. The illustrious name of Franklin first appears in connexion with the service of the American post office in 1737. He was then appointed postmaster of Philadelphia; and was commissioned as one of the two deputy postmaster generals of British North America in 1753. The length of the post roads in the thirteen colonies was then 1,532 miles, North Carolina having the most, New Hampshire the least, and New York 57 miles. After improving and enlarging the service, and returning to the British crown, as he says, three times as much clear revenue as the post office of Ireland, he was dismissed as deputy postmaster general, "by a freak of ministers," in 1774. But in the next year, July 26, 1775, he was elected Postmaster General of the United Colonies, by the unanimous vote of the continental Congress.

An advance of 15 years brings us to 1790, the official documents of which exhibit, through some meagre details, the extent of the post office operations of the first year of the present government of the United States. The whole mail service was comprised in twelve contracts, and consisted of a line of posts from Wiscasset to Savannah, with branches to Providence and Newport; to Norwich and New London; to Middletown; to Pittsburg; to Dover and Easton; to Annapolis, and to Norfolk and Richmond, upon no portion of which was the mail sent oftener than tri-weekly, and on much of it but once in two weeks. Between Philadelphia and Pittsburg, "a complete tour," was performed once in 20 days. The annual cost of the whole service was $22,702 07. The number of post offices was 75, and the length of post routes 1,875 miles.

If with this service of the first year we compare that of the fifty-eighth year of the government, we shall find the growth of this institution in the United States, in the number of its offices, the length of its routes, and the frequency of its mails, unequalled

in rapidity and extent by any other nation since the beginning of time.

XI.—*Conclusion.*

We have 16,159 post offices, whilst those of France in 1847 were 3,582, and of Great Britain, including 3,009 receiving houses, 4,785. We have 162,208 miles of post roads, and 41,012,579 miles of annual transportation of the mail inland. What the extent of transportation is in France or Great Britain, there are no statistics at hand to show; much less than ours, undoubtedly; but the circulation in the French mails was about 115 millions of letters in 1847, and in the British about 300 millions, whilst ours was less than 60 millions; whereas our population is but about 43 per cent. less than that of France, and 26 less than that of Great Britain. This shows that we make a greater provision of mails per capita, but that they are less used by the public in proportion to the population than in England or France. The greater equality of our service in favor of the dispersed and remote population, and the greater absorption in the French and English mails of the city and town letters going from street to street, with little comparative loss of accommodation on our part, are more than sufficient to account for the small difference in favor of France, whose Paris letters alone number -- millions annually. Not so with Great Britain. For the difference in her favor we must look to other causes, and we find them in the higher rates of our postage and the defective machinery of our system; both of which interpose checks to a universal resort to the mails. A change in the mode of business at the offices that will give more regularity to the mails, more certainty to the accounts, and more exactness to all the details of the service, and the liberalizing of the system by reducing the charge of transport, will produce inevitably a larger use of the post office by the people, and result in a vast improvement to all the business and social interests of the country.

I remain with the highest respect, your obedient servant,

S. R. HOBBIE,
First Assistant Postmaster General.

Honorable CAVE JOHNSON,
Postmaster General.